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SPECIAL REPORT: Keeping guns from the mentally ill

[by Troy Kehoe \(tkehoe@wsbt.com\)](mailto:tkehoe@wsbt.com)

By WSBT News1

Story Created: Apr 24, 2008 at 10:05 PM EDT

Story Updated: Apr 25, 2008 at 7:55 AM EDT

SOUTH BEND — One year after the fatal shooting of Corporal Nick Polizzotto, South Bend paused to remember the life and legacy of a local hero. But for some, it was a frustrating pause because questions about how the mentally ill man who shot him was able to obtain the gun remain unanswered.

They were questions Indiana lawmakers began asking in the wake of Polizzotto's shooting. At the time, some worried that "a lapse in information sharing" may have helped put the gun in 45-year-old Scott Barnaby's hands.

Barnaby shot Patrolman Mike Norby and killed Polizzotto on April 24 at the Wooden Indian Motel. Barnaby was also killed in the shoot-out.

But one year later, many of those same questions about "information sharing" remain unanswered, because of concerns about privacy. Some lawmakers still aren't sure where to draw the line between protected information and protecting innocent lives.

THE WORDS THAT CHANGED IT ALL

It was a simple phrase, but one year ago, when Chris Barnaby confirmed his brother Scott had wrestled with what he called "the demons in his head," WSBT began to dig deeper into Barnaby's past.

What that investigation uncovered was shocking.

"We had him forcibly committed," Barnaby said in April of 2007. "Yes. He's been in a mental institution."

And the symptoms, Chris said, were obvious when Scott Barnaby was off his medication. Paranoia, schizophrenia and delusions, just to name a few.

Barnaby had a history of treatment, too, at four different institutions, including one in Grand Rapids, where Chris Barnaby said Scott was forcibly committed.

They were the words that meant the system had failed.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE LAW

It's been 40 years since Congress banned the sale of firearms to anyone deemed "mentally defective" by a judge, and today, answering "yes" to "question 11-F" on a federal background check means an automatic disqualification for a handgun permit or purchase.

It reads, simply: "Have you ever been adjudicated mentally defective or involuntarily committed to a mental institution?"

It's aimed at preventing scenes like the one that played out on the campus of Virginia Tech just over one year ago. The gunman there, Sung Hui Cho, was responsible for the worst massacre on a college campus in U.S. history.

Court records show Cho was also ordered to receive mental health treatment by a judge who also declared him "dangerously mentally ill."

But he never went.

Even so, his background check came back clean.

So did Barnaby's, the day after the gun he bought illegally was used to kill Polizzotto.

Former Bristol firearms dealer Ronald Wedge was sentenced to serve prison time for falsifying information on Barnaby's application, and allowing him to buy the gun before his background check cleared.

But the fact remains, it *did* clear.

The question for lawmakers in both Indiana and Virginia one year ago, was why?

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS

They quickly found that the answers lie in the mental health records kept by each state in the nation. Just over 30 states share some, or all of those records with the federal government. In our area, Illinois recently began sharing many of their records, and Michigan is one of the few states in the country that shares nearly all their records.

But some states share none of their mental health records. That means all records of treatment, including treatment ordered by a court, is not included in the FBI's NICS database used to check the backgrounds of potential gun buyers.

In other words, in many cases, the FBI has no way of knowing whether or not that buyer has ever had any sign of mental illness.

One year ago, as Scott Barnaby pulled the trigger, Indiana was one of those states.

Today, it still is, and Nick's brother Tony Polizzotto calls that unacceptable.

"It seems like a no brainer to me," he said. "Half the states [still] don't have this law in action. And it's something that really needs to be brought to the forefront."

In the wake of Polizzotto's shooting and the campus shootings at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University, it has been brought to the forefront in the Hoosier state.

"Indiana is working to develop a mechanism for transfer of information to the background check system," said Jane Jankowski, a spokeswoman for Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels. "We know the state is not in full compliance. So, we're doing what nearly every other state is doing: looking for solutions."

At Gov. Daniels' direction, a panel that includes representatives from the Indiana State Police, Indiana Department of Homeland Security and the Indiana Supreme Court and others, has been meeting for the last nine months to formulate a plan on how the records might be shared.

But so far, there's been little movement.

SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

Indiana State Representative Ryan Dvorak (D-Granger) says there's a simple reason why.

"No one wants to see a violent criminal with a history of violent mental problems have a handgun permit," he said. "But we do have to be careful to balance out privacy concerns."

Rep. Dvorak says there are still too many unanswered questions.

"What are mental health records? What qualifies as something that needs to be reported? What would be some sort of incident that would disqualify somebody from getting a permit?" he asked.

Former Mayor of Fort Wayne Paul Helmke, who is now the president of the Washington, D.C. based Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, says it's clear at least 30 other states have already answered those questions with a simple definition.

"We're not talking about people who have gone in for counseling," he said. "[We're not talking about] people who have had treatment or people taking medication. We're talking about people who a court has found to be a danger to themselves or others because of mental illness."

Because of that, Helmke says the "privacy argument" no longer holds up.

"The gun dealer doesn't know the reasons for denial. They just get the signal that they're denied. So there really shouldn't be privacy concerns here," he said.

Indiana State Representative Jackie Walorski (R-Lakeville) doesn't buy it.

"We say, 'Oh, it's only going to go to the FBI. It's only going to their database.' Oh, really? Do we know that for sure? Hmm. I don't know if we know that for sure," she said.

Until she's assured the system would work the way Helmke describes it would, she says she'll refrain from calling for passage of a bill, or an executive order from the governor to begin sharing the state's records with the NICS.

Still, she does believe the issue needs further study.

But some aren't even convinced of that.

"From the perspective of the crimes that are brought to us, we don't really see the problem," said St. Joseph County Prosecutor Michael Dvorak. "As far as the tragedy with Corporal Polizzotto, whether or not a change in laws may have prevented that is speculative."

But despite the concerns and lack of movement, Helmke and others remain convinced change will come and soon.

MOVING FORWARD

Shortly after the shootings at Virginia Tech, Virginia Governor Tim Kaine signed an executive order mandating that his state's mental health records be shared with the NICS database. So far, Gov. Daniels hasn't followed suit. But Helmke says he, and state legislators may soon have no choice.

Three months ago, President Bush signed a bill passed overwhelmingly by Congress that allocates more than \$1 billion to help states cover the costs of sharing the records.

And if they don't?

"There will eventually be monetary penalties if the state doesn't fix it," said Helmke. "So, I'm hopeful that with the money and the concern about losing other dollars that the state is going to take some action."

It's a battle Tony Polizzotto never wanted to be a part of, but, like it or not, it's one he now feels he has to fight. And after 40 years of battles that have now hit all too close to home, he now wants to win the war by changing laws and changing minds.

"I don't know what they're going to do or how they're going to do it, but something has to happen," Polizzotto said.

Many are convinced something will happen. Both Representative Dvorak and Indiana Statehouse Speaker B. Patrick Bauer (D-South Bend) say it's likely some sort of bill on information sharing will move forward at the state capitol this fall.

And it's likely the pressure on lawmakers will only increase until it does.

It's coming from a number of different groups, including a group called Mayors Against Illegal Guns. South Bend Mayor Steve Luecke is a member of that group, and at a meeting earlier this month, helped draft a letter to state and federal leaders demanding a change in policy.

For those like Tony Polizzotto, it's a sign that real change will eventually come. His hope now, that it doesn't take another tragedy before it does.

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QUAKE: Shaker in Ill. rocks Indiana

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — No significant damage has been reported in Indiana after an earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.2 struck the Midwest Friday morning.

The quake just before 4:37 a.m. Central time was centered six miles from West Salem, Ill., and 45 miles from Evansville, Ind. It was felt in such distant cities as Chicago, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Des Moines, Iowa, 450 miles northwest of the epicenter.

"We have some minor reports of glass breakage and perhaps a mobile home may have come off its foundation," said Joe Wainscott Jr., executive director of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security.

Wainscott said some damage might not yet be apparent. Indiana Department of Transportation crews immediately began inspecting bridges and overpasses along such highways as Interstate 64 and U.S. 41 in southwestern Indiana, he said. He said as of midmorning the inspections were nearly completed and there were no reports of damage.

"The things on my curio were rattling and the water in the fish bowl was splashing," said Kelly Bolte, a waitress in Seymour, about 60 miles south of Indianapolis. "It felt like the dog was running through the house."

Indiana State Police spokesman Sgt. Todd Ringle from the Evansville post said he was shaken out of his bed. Another Evansville resident said he felt a rolling motion.

At Vincennes University, about 30 miles east of the epicenter, all five dormitories were evacuated as a precaution, sending nearly 1,500 students to an intramural field for an hour, said university spokesman Duane Chattin. The earthquake triggered the fire alarm in one residence hall, Chattin said. There was no damage or injuries reported on the campus, Chattin said.

The earthquake was felt across Indiana, shaking tall buildings and rattling windows in downtown Indianapolis.

It was felt as far as Kendallville, in the northeast corner of the state, about 250 miles from the epicenter.

"I was sitting at my computer," Kendallville resident Andrea Brand said. "The computer starting shaking and the desk started shaking. The whole house was shaking."

Scott Wilkerson, associate professor of geosciences at DePauw University in Greencastle, about 40 miles south Indianapolis, said he felt two episodes of shaking. He said that may represent two different seismic waves.

He said there likely will be some small aftershocks most of which people will not feel.

The quake is believed to have involved the Wabash fault, a northern extension of the New Madrid fault about six miles north of Mount Carmel, Ill., said United States Geological Survey geophysicist Randy Baldwin.

Phil Roberts, an earthquake consultant for Indiana, said the state experiences hundreds of earthquakes each year with magnitudes ranging from 1.2 to about 2.0 — too low to be felt.

"We can expect these things to happen and continue, and hopefully they won't be on a larger scale," he said.

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Earthquake centered in Illinois rocks Indiana

By The Associated Press
Friday, April 18, 2008 8:58 PM EDT

INDIANAPOLIS - Kyle and Julie Smith thought their dog was having a seizure when they awoke early Friday to find their bedroom shaking. But the dog wasn't on the bed - she was pacing nervously about as a magnitude 5.2 earthquake swayed the Midwest.

The temblor, which struck at 4:37 a.m. Central time and caused minor damage in southeastern Illinois, was felt as far away as Milwaukee, Des Moines, Iowa, and Atlanta.

Only small amounts of damage were reported in Indiana's southwestern corner.

The Smiths said they quickly realized that it was an earthquake because they recalled a magnitude 5.0 quake centered near Lawrenceville, Ill., that shook Indiana in 1987.

"It can't say that I was frightened at all because I remembered that one in the late '80s. It was really just a little bump," Kyle Smith said.

About six hours later, they were at work at downtown Indianapolis' 38-story OneAmerica Tower when they felt a magnitude 4.6 aftershock - one of dozens that followed the pre-dawn quake.

In Vincennes, about 25 miles from the first quake's epicenter six miles from West Salem, Ill., police reported that bricks fell from an abandoned home's chimney in the 5.2-magnitude quake.

Joe Wainscott Jr., executive director of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, said there were also reports from southwestern Indiana of glass breaking and a mobile home that may have come off its foundation.

Indiana State Police spokesman Sgt. Todd Ringle from the Evansville post said he was shaken out of his bed by the earth's motion. Other Indiana residents, such as Kelly Bolte, a waitress in Seymour, about 60 miles south of Indianapolis, were simply awakened by the shaking.

"The things on my curio were rattling and the water in the fish bowl was splashing," she said. "It felt like the dog was running through the house."

After the quake, Indiana Department of Transportation crews immediately began inspecting about 800 bridges and overpasses along such highways as Interstate 64 and U.S. 41 in southwestern Indiana. Only one problem was seen - a bridge with an existing problem that was possibly worsened by the quake, said INDOT spokesman Andy Dietrick.

"But this was not anything that would compromise the integrity of the bridge," he said.

After the 4.6-magnitude aftershock, he said INDOT crews re-inspected six bridges that are on a special inspection list because they have a similar design to the Interstate 35W bridge that collapsed in Minneapolis last August.

At Vincennes University, about 30 miles east of the epicenter, all five dormitories were evacuated as a precaution, sending nearly 1,500 students to an intramural field for an hour, said university spokesman Duane Chattin.

In one residence hall, the earthquake triggered the fire alarm, Chattin said.

The quake was apparently part of the Wabash Valley fault, a northern extension of the New Madrid fault about six miles north of Mount Carmel, Ill.

Larry Braile, head of Purdue University's Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, said Friday's quake was the most powerful in the Midwest since a magnitude 5.5 rocked southeastern Illinois in November 1968.

Phil Roberts, an earthquake consultant for Indiana, said the state experiences hundreds of earthquakes each year with magnitudes ranging from 1.2 to about 2.0 - too weak to be felt.

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INTERNATIONAL **Herald Tribune**

Fire destroys Clinton's campaign office in Indiana, investigation underway

The Associated Press

Friday, April 11, 2008

TERRE HAUTE, Indiana: Fire destroyed a campaign office of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton in western Indiana early Friday.

Two people were inside when the fire broke out but escaped without injuries, said Terre Haute Fire Department spokesman John Gardner.

Gardner said nothing so far had indicated the fire was arson.

"But we're doing a full investigation on it like any other commercial structure fire," he said.

Former President Bill Clinton stopped briefly outside the burned building Friday on his way to a campaign speech in the small city of Clinton about 20 miles (30 kilometers) north of Terre Haute.

"Our young workers here are undeterred, and they're ready to roll so we'll get it going," he said.

Clinton laughed when asked whether the fire was a bad sign for his wife's campaign. "No, I think this is a good omen," he said. "We'll rise from the ashes like the Phoenix."

A volunteer firefighter driving past the building in a commercial district along U.S. 41 south of the city's downtown spotted flames on the roof shortly after midnight and warned those inside, Gardner said.

The roof of the one-story building partially collapsed and a part of the front wall collapsed on a parked car, which then caught on fire. The adjoining office of a staffing services agency had water and smoke damage, but a fire wall held back the flames, Gardner said.

Clinton is battling Illinois Sen. Barack Obama for the Democratic presidential nomination. Both candidates have set up offices throughout Indiana as they vie for the state's 72 delegates in the May 6 primary.

[*Return to Fire*](#)

Fire destroys Farmersburg auction house

Staff report

The Tribune-Star

FARMERSBURG — A blaze that destroyed the Johnny Swalls Auction House in downtown Farmersburg early Thursday morning resulted in at least one serious injury.

A passerby discovered heavy smoke coming from the auction house at 117 W. Main St. and an apartment above it around 3:45 a.m.

Three individuals living in the second-floor apartment tried to jump into a pickup truck below, according to Chief John Quilliam of the Farmersburg Volunteer Fire Department. One missed and struck the concrete, Quilliam said. He was taken by ambulance to Sullivan Community Hospital, and later airlifted to Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis with head trauma.

Names were not released, and no information on the man's condition was available.

Seven fire departments responded, including the Farmersburg (Thunderbird Territory), Linton Township, Jackson Township (Hymera), Sullivan, Honey Creek, Fairbanks and Shelburn.

According to Pam Bright at the State Fire Marshal's office, no determination as to the cause of the fire had been made as of Thursday, and the fire was still under investigation.

Swalls, whose business continued Thursday with several closings, said his office was destroyed.

He was in the process of leasing a new building, and he said, "We're still in business ... keep calling the same old number!"

Swalls added that he did not know the tenants in the apartment above his office. The owner of the building is J.R. Wright.

Fire officials estimated the damage at around \$150,000.

Quilliam said it took until about 6:30 a.m. to extinguish the blaze completely, and crews were on scene most of the day.

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INDOT: Lack of coordination contributed to August floods

BY THE TIMES | Thursday, April 24, 2008 | [3 comment\(s\)](#)

Lack of preparation, communication and coordination between jurisdictions are among the reasons cited for the floods that shuttered the Borman Expressway in August, an Indiana Department of Transportation report issued Thursday said.

The report cites as reasons for the flood a series of sizable rainfall events which led to increased flood levels on the Little Calumet River.

"The cumulative effect of these rainfall events, high Little Calumet River stages, a breach in a levee west of Indianapolis Blvd., as well as an overall lack of preparation, communication and coordination between the entities responsible for operating the (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) Little Calumet River flood control levee system and INDOT led to the flooding," the report reads.

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Flood study notes failure to communicate

BY SUSAN BROWN

sbrown@nwitimes.com

219.836.3780 | Friday, April 25, 2008 | No comments posted.

HAMMOND | Engineers hired by the Indiana Department of Transportation are putting the highest priority on the completion of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control levee project to help prevent a repeat of the August flooding that closed the Borman Expressway.

In addition to expediting the uncompleted segments of the project, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is urged to complete operation, maintenance and flood warning plans and make them widely available.

The completion of the levee system, now projected for late 2009, is among a plethora of recommendations contained within a 62-page report released Thursday.

The estimated \$7 million fix includes \$2.7 million for improvements on the Borman at the Kennedy Avenue interchange, which include flap gate replacement, ditch vegetation clearing, backflow prevention valves and a stormwater lift station.

Some \$4.3 million worth of similar improvements are suggested for the Indianapolis Boulevard interchange and include measures aimed at helping the Woodmar neighborhood.

The cost of the improvements, some to be immediate and others over time, will be borne by INDOT, said John Pangallo, project manager for INDOT.

Even when improvements are made, the study indicates certain flood prevention efforts may need to continue for the service life of the Borman.

Conducted by Earth Tech, an Indianapolis-based engineering firm, the study found multiple causes for August's flooding, led off by a series of significant rainfalls that increased flood levels on the Little Calumet River. Some 7.3 inches of rainfall occurred between Aug. 18 and 24, estimated to be in the area of a 25-year rainfall.

The flooding in the southeast quadrant of the Kennedy Avenue interchange was mainly the result of a 54-inch flapgate that was stuck open from debris.

Flooding at the Indianapolis Boulevard interchange was mainly caused by very high Little Calumet River levels that resulted from a breach in the levee west of the boulevard.

By early Aug. 25, water levels exceeded the outlet of a 36-inch culvert that drains under the Borman east of the Indianapolis interchange. Backflow then discharged into Hammond's Woodmar neighborhood.

Besides citing the significant rainfall, the failed equipment and the accumulated debris, engineers found an overall lack of preparation, communication and coordination between the variety of entities responsible for the levee system and INDOT.

The stuck flap gate at the outlet of the 54-inch diameter pipe east of Kennedy Avenue might have been avoided by more frequent inspection and maintenance of the structure, according to the study.

Engineers said the flooding from the stuck gate could have been avoided or reduced if the upstream sluice gate had been closed as soon as possible after the river reached flood stage. Pumping operations continued for five days before it was learned the flap gate was open and the sluice gate was closed.

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Indianapolis, Ind. -- The Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) today sent a letter to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) appealing a decision to deny federal assistance for county governments in northern Indiana devastated by flooding earlier this year.

Counties included are: Benton, Carroll, Cass, Dekalb, Elkhart, Jasper, Kosciusko, Marshall, Newton, Noble, Pulaski, Starke and White. Last week, IDHS, Indiana Department of Transportation (IDOT), FEMA and county officials performed preliminary damage assessments to quantify additional damage in those counties.

FEMA's public assistance program provides supplemental federal disaster grant assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the repair, replacement, or restoration of disaster-damaged, publicly owned facilities and the facilities of certain private non-profit organizations. The program also encourages protection of these damaged facilities from future events by providing assistance for hazard mitigation measures during the recovery process.

On March 20, FEMA denied a request to financially assist county and local governments.

Source: Indiana Department of Homeland Security

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State appeals denial of flood assistance

Associated Press - April 22, 2008 4:34 PM ET

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) - The state is appealing the Federal Emergency Management Agency's denial of assistance to governments in 13 northern Indiana counties hit by flooding earlier this year.

Department of Homeland Security spokesman John Erickson says individual residents who applied for aid have already begun receiving payments.

But the department on Tuesday sent a letter to FEMA asking the federal agency to reconsider its decision last month to deny aid to the governments in Benton, Carroll, Cass, DeKalb, Elkhart, Jasper, Kosciusko, Marshall, Newton, Noble, Pulaski, Starke and White counties.

State officials say the flooding that began Jan. 7 damaged more than 800 homes and caused more than \$33 million damage. President Bush approved federal disaster aid for residents in the area roughly from Lafayette to South Bend and Fort Wayne.

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State appeals FEMA decision on flood aid

Tribune Staff Report

Flooding in Kosciusko County in January, 2008. (WSBT file photo)

By Beth Boehne

Story Created: Apr 22, 2008 at 3:45 PM EDT

Story Updated: Apr 22, 2008 at 3:48 PM EDT

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Department of Homeland Security Tuesday sent a letter to the Federal Emergency Management Agency appealing a March 20 denial of federal assistance for northern Indiana counties affected by flooding earlier this year.

Counties included are Elkhart, Marshall, Kosciusko, Starke, Benton, Carroll, Cass, DeKalb, Jasper, Newton, Noble, Pulaski and White.

Last week, Homeland Security, the Indiana Department of Transportation, FEMA and county officials performed preliminary damage assessments to quantify additional damage in those counties.

FEMA's public assistance program provides supplemental disaster grant assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the repair, replacement, or restoration of disaster-damaged, publicly owned and certain private non-profit facilities, as well as hazard mitigation measures during the recovery process.

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Post-Tribune

Borman flooding could happen again

April 25, 2008

By Erik Potter Post-Tribune staff writer

The summer flooding that brought Interstate 94 to its knees in August could happen again, according to the Indiana Department of Transportation, which held a news conference Thursday after releasing an engineering report on the incident.

The report was prepared for INDOT by Earth Tech, an international engineering firm with offices in Indianapolis.

INDOT tasked Earth Tech with finding out what caused I-94, also known as the Borman in most of Lake County, to flood last summer and how to prevent it from happening again.

From Aug. 18 to 25, 7.5 inches of rain fell in Northwest Indiana. Water levels on the Little Calumet River rose and backed up onto the Borman Expressway at Kennedy Avenue causing road closures from Aug. 23 to 26.

All eastbound lanes at Kennedy Avenue were closed for two and a half days. The westbound lanes were closed entirely for half a day, and reduced to two lanes for the remaining day and a half.

Immediate blame for the flooding was placed on a stuck "flap gate" -- a type of drain pipe cover -- that allowed flood water from the river to travel up through a drain pipe and reach the expressway. But the Earth Tech report cast a wider net of criticism.

It described the August event as a "combination of weather circumstances, facility failures, and an overall lack of preparation, communication and coordination between the entities responsible for operating the ... flood control system at Kennedy Avenue and INDOT."

At the time, it wasn't clear who was responsible for the operation and maintenance of the flood control equipment.

Since last August, INDOT has taken over responsibility for the Kennedy Avenue drainage control.

However, the levees protecting Kennedy Avenue are old and ill-equipped to hold back significant flood waters, particularly in the southwest corner of Kennedy Avenue and the Borman.

The report states that a levee spillover there would likely flood adjacent development and could "potentially affect drainage on the expressway itself."

INDOT was more upbeat about Indianapolis Boulevard, which also experienced flooding.

The Earth Tech report said the flooding of the eastbound lanes of the Borman at Indianapolis Boulevard was caused by a levee breach 1,200 feet to the west. That levee is scheduled to be remade as part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Little Calumet River levee project, but not until next year.

Until then, "this location will remain a vulnerable point for future breaching," the report stated.

"We don't have the permanent solution (at that intersection), which is a permanent lift station," INDOT project engineer John Pangallo said. "We'll have to react with crews and pumps. We're not where we want to be, but we feel like we can (respond) to any event."

The report made three recommendations to help prevent future flooding.

It called for the Army Corps to complete its flood control project as soon as possible (tentatively slated for a Dec. 31, 2009, finish).

It also asked for INDOT to develop a flood prevention plan to minimize flooding while the levee project is still unfinished.

It also recommended that INDOT pursue \$7 million in improvements, including replacing flap gates with the more reliable "duckbill" flood valves and developing plans to install a permanent drainage lift station.

Contact Erik Potter at 648-3120 or epotter@post-trib.com

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Study blames poor communication in I-80/94 flooding

Associated Press - April 25, 2008 7:24 AM ET

HAMMOND, Ind. (AP) - A report finds that poor communication between agencies contributed to last summer's flooding that closed a portion of Interstate 80/94 in northwest Indiana for several days.

The Indiana Department of Transportation released an engineering firm's report on the flooding Thursday.

A three-mile stretch of the road, also known as the Borman Expressway, was closed in late August after 7.5 inches of rain fell in northwest Indiana.

The engineering report says floodwaters from the Little Calumet River reached the roadway due to a stuck drain pipe cover. But it also says it wasn't clear who was supposed to maintain and operate the flood control equipment.

Since the flooding, INDOT has taken over responsibility for drainage control in the area.

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